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ABSTRACT

Noting that most writing across the curriculum programs have been dominated by the thinking of members of the English or composition departments, this paper describes the program developed at Loyola College (Maryland), which involved collaboration between writing specialists and content area teachers. The paper first describes the Loyola model--entitled Empirical Rhetoric--a six-year effort supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), which is built on the concept of paired teaching. In addition, it describes the training of the teachers and the responsibilities they undertake as "departmental writing coordinators." The paper next reviews the steps taken in preparing and administering a program evaluation instrument, the "Survey of Faculty Opinions on Student Writing." It then discusses the findings of the survey and comments on the lessons learned from it. Appendixes contain copies of the NEH grant proposal and the faculty survey instrument. (FL)

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Writing Across the Curriculum, Phase Two: Beyond the Workshop Empirical Rhetoric at Loyola

The movement to teach writing across the curriculum has spawned literally scores of programs, workshops, institutes, and other administrative structures and academic happenings in colleges and universities across the land. In most cases, English or composition departments have taken the lead, sharing their new insights about teaching students to write with colleagues in other academic departments. Done with great confidence and enthusiasm, with the best of intentions on all sides, such sharing can, nevertheless, become indoctrination, as English teachers preach the gospel to the heathens. "We had a writing-across-the-curriculum workshop for the History Department," reported an ardent and knowledgeable colleague in Literature at another institution, who was enjoying an Orioles game with us last summer, "but they didn't buy it." Did this mean, we asked her, that historians were refusing to assign any writing to their students? No--but the members of the department in question were heathen of the stubborn sort; they refused to accept the "it" being proposed.

"It" was a collection of ideas about writing assembled, for the most part, by composition instructors. Yet, how universal is their approach to student writing? There is a considerable body of thought and research indicating that readers' differing backgrounds will affect their attitudes to writing. Even among English instructors, Janet Emig and Robert Parker suggest that different kinds of critical training (Aristotelian, Rhetorical, Expressive, or New Critics) will affect how they approach student writing. How many more differences, then, might there be among the different academic disciplines? As long as the

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"it" of writing across the curriculum is derived only from the experiences of composition teachers, "its" acceptance by faculty from other disciplines (even by all the members of English departments) will be unpredictable.

The Loyola Model

At Loyola College, we decided to experiement to see if "it" could be defined in an interdisciplinary context, through close and prolonged collaboration between writing specialists and members of "content" disciplines. With the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, we established a six-year program entitled "Empirical Rhetoric," which seeks to develop a shared approach to the teaching of writing among the composition and the "content" faculty. Loyola College is primarily an undergraduate college with an enrollment of 2600 students and a faculty of 160, organized into about twenty academic departments--among them separate departments of English Literature and Writing/Media. Loyola's required freshman composition course is not taught by members of the English department, but by the writing faculty.

As is common everywhere, the last five years have seen considerable complaint at Loyola about the writing performance of students. Last spring, in a massive survey of the faculty, only 23.5% expressed satisfaction with the quality of their students' writing. In our periodic rounds of curriculum-reform discussions, this dissatisfaction has more than once led to proposals for adding another required wiriting course, or even two, like the junior year requirements that have appeared elsewhere. Loyola already has a large core requirement, though, and increasing it still further would meet resistance, even among the liberal arts faculty. Empirical Rhetoric was designed to avoid the solution of "throwing another course at the problem" by focusing instead on the links that could be made between the required freshman writing course and the rest of the curriculum.

This, again, is not an uncommon formulation. The most common approach to the task is the workshop or series of workshops, run by writing faculty or visiting experts, like the one our friend was describing to us at the ball game. Doubtful that one-way communication would ever lead to a sense of responsibility for student writing on the part of the content faculty, we fixed instead on "paired teaching" as the central element in our program. A writing instructor and a content instructor teach together for two semesters--in a variety of ways: merging freshman sections, arranging for cross enrollments, or simply incorporating the writing instructor into the structure of the content course as consultant, paper commentator, or even student. The goal is for the two members of each pair to confront together real classroom issues in situations of real classroom stress; issues such as time management, subject priorities, grading standards, students' feelings are bound to be ignored or glossed over in workshop settings.

Empirical Rhetoric II has thus far paired writing instructors with colleagues in Accounting, Chemistry, English Literature, Management, Philosophy, Political Science, and Psychology--with Finance, Foreign Languages and Literature, Sociology, and Theology due to begin this June. It is a tribute to the good nature of our faculty that the widely varying pedagogical styles, scholarly casts of thought, and personal tastes that our participants have brought to year-long collaborations have not yet, at least, resulted in open warfare. Instead they have led content instructors to confront basic issues of audience, purpose, and rhetorical structure in their assigned writing in their disciplines, and composition instructors to confront equally basic issues of factual accuracy, comprehensiveness of research, conformity to established formats, and genuine apprehension about the persistence of students' mechanical errors. We did prepare our

participants with three-week summer workshops and other planning sessions before their pairings began. These were conducted in fairly traditional ways, and we found that their common readings, heated discussions, visiting speakers, and weekly parties promoted a camaraderie that doubtless has helped during the stormier moments during the school year and has seeped in irresistable ways across our campus.

After the year of pairing is over, the content participants serve for another three years as "departmental writing coordinators," charged with preparing reports on their experiences, relating them to their departments, and generally promoting a coordinated approach to student writing in their disciplines. Good ideas have already surfaced in the departments, such as departmental prizes for model writing and department workshops on writing policy. Writing handbooks for students describing the standards for writing in each field, set down in terminology familiar to students and faculty alike, will be the final product of the writing coordinators. By the end of the grant period, fourteen departments other than Writing Department will have such handbooks.

Evaluating The Loyola Model: Faculty Survey of Attitudes and Practices

How to evaluate all this? Empirical Rhetoric II is above all a faculty development program, so we have focused on the attitude of the faculty itself rather than on the less proximate effects upon students. This decision makes accountability complex.

As we planned our proposal for NEH, we were sure that our plan would succeed--it was inherently wonderful, we were inherently wonderful, and NEH only funds wonderful projects. Initially we gave much thought to the project and some to evaluation. Only now, as we approach the end of our second year

of ER II, as we ask what we will actually have at the end of our grant, compared to the "promises, promises" we made at the beginning, have we refined our evaluation scheme.

Because we emphasize exchange both directions across the curriculum, in our second year of Empirical Rhetoric we are still asking what writing-across-the-curriculum at Loyola will actually be. When will we actually have "it"? How much of it do we want? How good will it be, both as a matter of integrity and endurance?

At present, we have four sources of grist for our evaluative mill: (1) certainly NEH has imposed a grand deadline, yearly deadlines, and criteria for quality control; (2) visiting experts offer appraisal; (3) we are collecting documentation from our participants; (4) as the most empirical measurement of Empirical Rhetoric, we have designed a survey of faculty attitude and practice. These do not, however, comprise a tight evaluative scheme. On the one hand, it would seem that those who have the effrontery to design a program must know in advance exactly what they will measure and should set that up. Steve Witte et al. in The Empirical Development of an Instrument for Reporting Course and Teacher Effectiveness in College Writing Classes, Technical Report No. 3, comments, "An acceptable definition of good teaching or what good teachers do must precede any valid measure of teaching." The success of Elaine Maimon's program at Beaver College can be measured by the extent to which she moves a canon of ideas about writing across hers and other curricula. Working to realize a predetermined set of specific goals certainly is one step in guaranteeing success, especially in a short-term project.

When an institution has six years of funding, however, there is something to be said, on the other hand, for remaining open-ended initially. While one

runs the risk of presiding over chaos, that approach allows for surprise and discovery. In our first year, we identified goals beyond those described in our original grant proposal. We spent last July revising our project for NEH. We will tinker and fine-tune further this summer.

A commitment to flexibility has meant we have had to gather what an ethnographer would call thick data, and we have whole file drawers of what we hope is the right stuff.

But under the auspices of the Writing Council, a standing faculty committee established by the College at the behest of ER II, we have created as our primary evaluative tool our SURVEY OF FACULTY OPINIONS ON STUDENT WRITING, an instrument that like our entire program has evolved. A copy of the instrument can be obtained from the authors. Such an instrument is hard to create, to administer, and to interpret under any circumstances, but especially if one seeks information that will yield suggestions for its interpretation.

Creating the Survey

We considered using sombody else's survey, for such instruments exist--but most proselytized rather blatantly, and, again, we wanted to explore the situation on our campus. We wanted to go through the process of generating questions that would ask our faculty everything we, if not they, ever wanted to know about writing at Loyola and then prune out the thousand or so questions that didn't matter or couldn't be asked.

We had missed absolute base-line data, but we were encouraged to discover that we could appropriately conduct a panel survey, a form of longitudinal study, and, in fact, under that constraint, we could modify our survey instrument for the third and fifth years, a prospect that seemed right in line with our goal of keeping the agenda for our program flexible.

Remembering the terms validity and reliability from grad school, we sought professional consultation.

We had lunch with a statistician able to talk to us about measurement scales (1, 2, 3, 4; agree/disagree; undecided vs no opinion vs nothing), about the dangers of writing a question that asks for four pieces of information at once, of asking loaded questions, of writing a question in which a "yes" answer tells you something and "no" tells you nothing. She sent us and our thousand questions to a professional in educational measurement, Dr. Joyce Epstein of the Center for Social Organization of Schools at The Johns Hopkins University.

Epstein helped us to particularize responses, eliminate redundant items, and format the attitude items into four sub-categories: (1) current status of writing instruction; (2) responsibility for teaching writing; (3) approaches to writing, further divided into assignments, preliminary work, and evaluation; and (4) faculty development. She saw that if we really were seeking information beyond what we knew to ask for, that we should supply lines where faculty would write their own comments--and they did.

Administering the Survey

She was of enormous help in anticipating the second area of difficulty in surveying faculty, administering the instrument. Because our faculty is small, we needed a high response rate. Epstein suggested arranging confidentiality rather than anonymity through an elaborate envelope system described on the first page of the survey; we also used lunch vouchers and pens in order to get maximum response to ward off the inevitable effects of attrition.

She warned us that it is hard to obliterate personality. Even the size of the type and the shape of the booklet send messages, and we were concerned

about our small booklet with its small type. Even with her cautionary advice, we made two egregious errors on page 3--we forgot to list the chemistry department and, worse, put seven boxes instead of six for the identification number, which, judging from the exclamations on the booklets themselves got many off to an angry, contemptuous start.

Interpreting the Survey

Most important, Epstein looked ahead to the third area of pitfalls, interpretation. Peter Berger, in Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective, comments:

> The prominence of statistical techniques in American sociology today has, then, certain ritual functions that are readily understandable in view of the power system within which most sociologists have to make a career. In fact, most sociologists have little more than a cookbook knowledge of statistics, treating it with about the same mixture of awe, ignorance, and timid manipulation as a poor village priest would the mighty Latin cadences of Thomist theology . . .
>
> Statistical data by themselves do not make sociology. They become sociology only when they are sociologically interpreted, put within a theoretical frame of reference that is sociological. Simple counting, or even correlating different items that one counts, is not sociology. (11)

One can substitute "writing" for every "sociology" and see that perhaps the most important contribution Joyce Epstein made as she coped with our "awe" and "ignorance" was in finding the hidden agenda in our original array of items. In our questions lurked fourteen goals for Empirical Rhetoric II, few of which were ever specified in our grant proposal. (See Appendix A).

This fourteen point framework illuminates raw statistics that, as Berger indicates, are by themselves meaningless or easily distorted though the framework does not mean that we will not need further professional advice to correct and/or affirm our interpretations of our data. Numbers begin to do peculiar

things the moment a human mind begins those "timid manipulations" to which Berger referred.

For example, page 2 of the survey shows we distributed 293 surveys and got 234 back for a 79.863% return rate, remarkable in the world of statistics, disappointing when we wanted 100%. However, discounting 8 people who furnished no identifying information, presumably because they were turned off by the seven boxes, we had an 89.24% return in the humanities, 80.52% return in the social sciences, 81.48% in the physical sciences; it was the 53.62% return in business and management, the area in which most of our adjuncts teach, that pulled down the rate. However, discounting again those recalcitrant eight, who perhaps weren't put off by the boxes after all but had had lumpy oatmeal for breakfast or simply missed the first page altogether, 87% of the full-time untenured and 89.61% of the full-time tenured faculty responded. And a 64.74% response from a part-time crew that represents 47.44% of the day school faculty is, when you stop to think about it, an impressive return in our frame of reference. Specifically what motivation one can assign our faculty for overlooking the seven-box confusion to respond quickly and fully just as the semester came to a close remains guesswork. We like to think approval of our program and general endorsement of writing at Loyola prompted them rather than the $2.00 lunch vouchers or the excuse to postpone marking exams or lumpless oatmeal, but we cannot conclude that with absolute surety.

As another example, we circled any "no opinion" response over 20% and found many, but can we attribute this response to ignorance rather than indifference? We looked at the direction opinion leaned in the section of the survey that asked faculty their sense of the current status of writing on the campus. In our first interpretation, we concluded that "1, 5, and 6 assert that students

don't do enough good writing nor (2) has the freshman course served them well; nonetheless, 3 tells us that students feel writing is appropriate and although the students don't expect to improve their skills in the courses (4), close to three/quarters of the faculty do see improvement."

However, one could read this quite differently: "Although students feel writing is appropriate and close to 3/4 of the faculty see improvement, students don't expect to improve, they do not do enough writing, and the freshman course doesn't serve them well at all."

We are uncertain which reading is right.

On the other hand, some messages are loud and clear. Our twelfth point in our fourteen point framework promises our faculty will be "agreed on a policy for handling mechanics." As Steve Witte, David Hamilton, and Richard Larson all witnessed last summer, this is an issue our writing faculty would rather ignore, but it matters to faculty in the disciplines. The strongest response we got in the entire survey was 60.3% of the faculty arguing that when a student's written work has basic errors in mechanics, faculty should identify all the mistakes on the paper. Clearly the issue must be addressed.

The framework of expectations is, therefore, both useful and dangerous in slanting our interpretation of data. It could also be dangerously limiting if we considered it inclusive. In the course of our first year and a half of operation, we have discovered several phenomena that we had not initially expected:

(1) The first is emphasis on departmental action. As we wrote our grant proposal, we sought only like minds in the liberal arts, without a strong sense that even the technical departments might become involved in our program. We have since changed our mind, and the survey affirms a decision we made last summer to shoot for fourteen departments rather than for just a friendly

few and to take far more seriously than we had originally intended the handbooks that those departments are to produce.

(2) Secondly, our establishment of departmental writing coordinatorships in the content departments only was an unconscious carryover from the assumption that ideas about teaching writing flow one way only. Except for a few token statements in the grant proposal about mutuality of exchange, we have presupposed that all change will take place on the far side of the curriculum, a common assumption on the part of many who push writing to the far reaches of the curriculum. In our first year round-up of material for evaluation, we collected assignment sheets, syllabi, and marked papers only from the content participants. Yet writing faculty participating in ER II have been re-evaluating their existing freshman course in the light of the diversity of writing they have experienced in other disciplines.

(3) We also see an impatience among the faculty as a whole. Individual pairings with the four to five members of the Writing Department available each year mean that Empirical Rhetoric proceeds quite slowly across the curriculum. The Writing Council was induced this year to sponsor a three-part workshop series for those not willing to wait; similarly, parts of this summer's seminar will be open to the faculty at large.

(4) Finally, as the field of writing acquires more and more of the elements of a separate discipline, the pairings have proven unexpectedly productive of research opportunities for ER II participants. Faculty pairs have presented or will soon present papers about teaching writing at scholarly meetings of the Modern Language Association, the American Historical Association, the American Association of Management, the Penn State Conference on Rhetoric and Composition, the national conference on Writing in the Humanities--and, of course, here today at the CCCC.

As we continue our work-in-progress at Loyola College, we see an evaluation scheme emerge that shapes an emergent program that moves beyond the workshop to explore in deep and serious fashion what writing-across-the-curriculum, examined from diverse perspectives, really means.

APPENDIX A:
EVALUATION: EMPIRICAL RHETORIC II

PURPOSE: To measure the effect of Empirical Rhetoric II on faculty attitude and practice at Loyola College.

SPECIFICALLY, whether faculty

1. see writing as an important skill distinguishing Loyola graduates;
2. see writing as inseparable from content;
3. understand the CA113: Effective Writing Curriculum;
4. endorse the CA113 curriculum;
5. seek to build students' sense that there are coherent and consistent writing skills and standards that apply across the curriculum;
6. choose to maximize amount and types of writing appropriate to their disciplines, recognizing writing is best taught in context;
7. see writing as a process in which they can and should intervene with
   - --written assignments, specifying audience, purpose, format, strategy
   - --models of good writing
   - --feedback on drafts or sequential writing
   - --response on the final draft that both defends a grade and teaches toward future writing;
8. see students should retain ownership of their writing tasks;
9. are positive about their ability to assign and respond to student writing;
10. are more optimistic that papers will be good;
11. are less defensive about grading writing;
12. are agreed on a policy for handling mechanics;
13. feel less lonely as they work to improve writing;
14. feel the administration values their efforts toward improving writing.

MEASUREMENT

1. NEH Criteria for Awarding Grant

2. Visiting Experts: David Hamilton, University of Iowa
   Richard Larson, Herbert H. Lehman College of CUNY
   Stephen Witte, University of Texas at Austin

3. Campus Activity:

   Events: Summer Seminars I-IV, Summer Lecture Series, Paired Teaching, Writing Council Faculty Workshop on Writing, Empirical Rhetoric meetings, conference presentations and attendance, campus presentations

   Participants' Paper Trail: syllabi, assignment sheets, graded papers, evaluation forms

   Publicity

   Writing Council

   Departmental Handbooks

4. Survey of Faculty Opinions on Student Writing, administered May 1983, May 1985, May 1987.

LOYOLA COLLEGE IN MARYLAND

APPENDIX B:

SOME RESULTS: FACULTY SURVEY ON WRITING LOYOLA COLLEGE IN MARYLAND

Dear Colleague,

You probably know that last year the college received a large grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to conduct a program in writing across the curriculum. In order to evaluate this program, called Empirical Rhetoric II, we need to conduct periodic surveys of the faculty. This is the first.

In order to satisfy the National Endowment (and ourselves), we need a 100% response to this questionnaire. We know that this has been a bumper year for questionnaires, but this one is, we think, different. The Empirical Rhetoric grant provides substantial indirect-cost revenues to the general fund of the college, and its success as a program and a research project will reflect well on the whole institution. The department chairmen have kindly agreed to help us keep track of responses with a view to our goal of 100% returns.

This questionnaire is not at all connected with merit schemes or tenure or promotion considerations. We have taken considerable pains to preserve anonymity while enabling us to track responses over time as well as guarantee the 100% response. Please be frank in your answers and do not hesitate to add your own responses. While we hope that you will find the items in the survey specific enough to represent your views accurately, we have included spaces for your comments. We hope that you will use them. Besides mapping where we are at present, the survey might also suggest new directions to follow as we decide where we are to travel next.

Please use the enclosed pen to fill out the survey (it is our gift to you for doing so!) and seal the completed booklet in the white envelope. Then place the sealed white envelope inside the numbered brown envelope, and return it to your department chairman. Do not return the surveys to us or to the Writing Department. This will only disrupt the response system and generate troublesome telephone calls.

We are most grateful for your help and promise not to survey you again for at least two years.

Yours truly,

Barbara Mallonee
Co-Director

Jack Breihan
Co-Director

Empirical Rhetoric II

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APPENDIX B:
SOME RESULTS: FACULTY SURVEY ON WRITING
LOYOLA COLLEGE IN
MARYLAND

I. D. Number

SURVEY OF FACULTY OPINIONS ON STUDENT WRITING

Identification Number

In order to preserve the anonymity of your responses while still enabling them to be tracked over time, please compose a six-digit identification number for your form, using your month and date of birth followed by the last 2 to 4 numbers of your Social Security number in reverse to total six digits.

Examples:
If you were born July 2, SS#123-45-6789, your ID would be 729876.
If you were born October 30, SS#987-65-4321, your ID would be 103012.

This number is confidential. Enter this number in the upper right-hand corner of this page.

Academic Area

293 surveys distributed
234 returned
79.863% RETURN

Please check your academic area.

83 Humanities (79.31% R)	62 Social Sciences (80.52% R)	44 Physical (61.93% R)	37 Business & (53.62% R)	NO RESPONSE
35.5% English	26.5% & Education	18.8% Sciences	15.8% Management	8
Fine Arts	Sociology	Mathematics	Finance	3.5%
Writing	Political Science	Engineering	Management	
Philosophy	Education	Science	Management	
Theology	Psychology	Physics	Science	
History	Economics	Computer Science	Accounting	
Foreign Languages	Speech Pathology	Biology	Marketing	
		Chemistry!!		

Please check your current academic status:

90 Part-time (139)	67 Full-time untenured (77)	69 Full-time tenured (77)	NO RESPONSE
38.5% 64.74% R	28.6% 87% R	29.5% 89.61% R	8
			3.4%

PART I: GENERAL ATTITUDES

Most of the questions below should be answered on the 5-point scale set out below. Circle the one response that comes closest to what you think. If you have not thought about the question or have no opinion, circle ?.

AGR means you strongly agree with the statement.
agr means you agree or tend to agree, but not strongly.
? means you have not thought about the question or have no opinion.
dis means you disagree or tend to disagree, but not strongly.
DIS means you strongly disagree with the statement.

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APPENDIX B: OK

SOME RESULTS: FACULTY SURVEY ON WRITING
LOYOLA COLLEGE IN MARYLAND

CURRENT STATUS OF WRITING INSTRUCTION

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE
1. Loyola students do a sufficient amount of writing during their four years at the College.	4 / 1.7%	48 / 20.5%	78 / 33.3%	68 / 29.1%	29 / 12.4%	7 / 3.0%
2. The required freshman course, Effective Writing (CA113), trained my students to write effectively in my course sections.	3 / 1.3%	34 / 14.5%	109 / 46.6%	63 / 26.9%	17 / 7.3%	8 / 3.4%
3. Students seem to feel writing assignments are inappropriate in my course sections.	10 / 4.3%	40 / 17.1%	25 / 10.7%	96 / 41.0%	58 / 24.8%	5 / 2.2%
4. Students expect to improve their writing skills in my course sections.	24 / 10.3%	43 / 18.4%	54 / 23.1%	66 / 28.2%	39 / 16.7%	8 / 3.4%
5. I am satisfied with the quality of the writing done by my students.	7 / 3.0%	48 / 20.5%	23 / 9.8%	102 / 43.6%	50 / 21.4%	4 / 1.8%
6. I am satisfied with the amount of time my students spend outside of class preparing their written work.	6 / 2.6%	56 / 23.9%	47 / 20.1%	78 / 33.3%	40 / 17.1	7 / 3.0%
7. By the end of each semester, I usually see improvement in most of my students' writing.	24 / 10.3%	84 / 35.9%	59 / 25.2%	52 / 22.2%	10 / 4.3%	5 / 2.2%

	PERCENT	NO RESPONSE
8. In comparison with colleagues in my department, (Check as many as apply)		
(a) I assign 59 more 121 same amount of 27 less written work.	25.2% / 51.7% / 11.5%	27 / 11.5%
(b) I assign 46 more 109 same amount of 31 less complex written work.	19.7% / 46.6% / 13.2%	48 / 20.5%
(c) I am 61 more 108 less 16 as rigorous in grading written work.	26.1% / 46.2% / 6.8%	49 / 20.9%
9. In comparison with colleagues in other departments at Loyola, (Check as many as apply)		
(a) I assign 58 more 49 same amount of 55 less written work.	24.8% / 20.9% / 23.5%	72 / 30.8%
(b) I assign 49 more 51 same amount of 46 less complex written work.	20.9% / 21.8% / 19.7%	88 / 37.6%
(c) I am 56 more 66 less 22 as rigorous in grading written work.	23.9% / 28.2% / 19.4%	90 / 38.4%

Comments on the current status of writing instruction: _____

NO RESPONSE . 142 60.5%

COMMENT . 92 39.3%

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